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HELMS SEEKS DELAY ON STATE DEPT. JOB

Raises Security Questions on
1979 News Article by Aide,
an ex-Times Reporter

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15 — Senator Jesse Helms tried today to delay the confirmation of Richard Burt as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs by asking for an investigation of the effect of a 1979 news article in The New York Times written by Mr. Burt when he was a reporter for the newspaper.

The article discussed plans by the United States to replace electronic monitoring stations in Iran with a satellite system and a large radio intercept antenna in Norway. The stations had been lost because of the revolution in Iran.

In a letter to Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Helms asked that Mr. Percy request the Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence to undertake a "damage assessment" of the June 28, 1979 article by Mr. Burt, who was then a Washington correspondent for The Times.

No Comment From Percy

Mr. Burt joined the State Department when President Reagan took office in 1981, serving first as Director of the Office of Politico-Military Affairs. His nomination to be Assistant Secretary for European Affairs was announced this year, and a confirmation hearing by the Foreign Relations Committee today was the occasion for Senator Helms, Republican of North Carolina, to make public his letter.

There was no immediate comment from Senator Percy. If he declines to ask for such an investigation, it is possible that Senator Helms may ask for a delay in voting on Mr. Burt's confirmation, Senate staff members said.

Senator Helms's letter asserted that the news article "broke extremely sensitive classifications" and that its effect was "to compromise our ability to detect Soviet missile testing." Mr. Helms said he found it "disturbing that a person involved in compromising our verification procedures be appointed to an important post."

Mr. Burt told the hearing that decisions on whether to publish material that might have been derived from classified documents were ultimately made by The Times editors in Washington and in New York.